

Postscripts by Jack Post

During the latter part of the summer, unknown to most of us, we had an experiment in conservation running right here on Duxbury Beach. You would have found out about this if you had trudged down to High Pines, which is quite a walk in anyone's boots, through the sands or over the shifting shale, for when you finally made it, you might have been stopped from going out into the tidal creek by the conservation patrol operating on week-ends and holidays.

The marshy bay shore of High Pines does not attract you or me to any great extent, but for migrating shore birds wearily winging south, the place is a motel with every convenience for the birds. Food and rest with peace and quiet can be found there, providing, of course, that not too many disruptive human beings come splashing into the sanctuary. So the Audubon Society, knowing the needs of other-than-human migrants, decided to try to keep the area to the birds from mid-July through the early weeks of September. After that, most humans forget about the beach and turn their attention to things like football on week-ends, giving the wildfowl their wilderness undisturbed.

This experiment parallels the one that has been protecting the nesting area of the terns over on Plymouth Beach. Here for some years a colony that was fast disappearing has been encouraged with freedom from human interference during the nesting season, with the result that the number of birds has increased markedly and this colony is no longer in danger of extinction.

These are good marks chalked up to our local interest in Duxbury, but we will have to be very foresighted to anticipate the squeezing pressure of forecasted growth on our community. The Planning Board report, issued as a Clipper supplement on Sept. 26, predicts a rise in the population of our town from 6,800 to about double that ten years from now, or approximately 12,300 in 1978 and 18,300 by 1985. Considering the open land available, these people could be wedged in among us; but how will we be living? Will we remain a rural town with streams and fields and woods; or will we become urbanized, with neighbor jammed on top of reluctant neighbor, with no wild places, with filled swamps, with no animal life and few birds?

Frankly, we still have a choice as the Planning Board hearing last week made obvious. The list of recommendations made by the consulting engineers includes two "greenbelts" running through the town, which basically will safeguard wild areas now existing, at small cost to the town; plus tidal and salt marsh acquisitions. For recreation, new boating areas, new playgrounds, walking paths are suggested, not all of which seem appropriate, but which in general make good sense. If you have not read the report, you should, for it not only plans to keep Duxbury much as it is today, that is a country town, but it outlines sensible means of doing so. This program, adopted in the town meeting next March, could mean the continuance of the life so many of us love into our children's generation.

Of course, any such plan will generate opposition, for there will be cases where personal gain will have to be forfeited for the public good; and while this is all right when it affects the other fellow, when it hurts you, you scream, loud and clear. So prepare yourself to hear a lot of noise when our future comes up for vote. If you are interested, you should familiarize yourself with the facts before then, by going to the Planning Board meetings and reading the reports. If you do, you will be able to separate reality from emotion and come up with a reasonable decision on the future of Duxbury.